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**It Was a Dark and Stormy Night:  
Chaim Kruger as an Author of Serialized Novels in  
the *Keneder Adler*, 1927–1933**

## Abstract

*Chaim Kruger (1877–1933) was born in Lithuania, educated in Lithuanian yeshivas, and became a personality of some importance in the Montreal Jewish community after his emigration to Canada in 1907. He was a rabbi, a rosh yeshiva (teacher of Talmud), a shokhet (kosher slaughterer), and, not least, a mainstay on the journalistic staff of Montreal's Yiddish newspaper, Der Keneder Adler, from 1921 to 1933. At the Keneder Adler, he contributed to nearly every section of the newspaper. Kruger translated into Yiddish the wire service reports of items of national and international interest for the front page. He wrote thousands of articles under his own name as well as several pseudonyms on a wide range of subjects including extended series of articles on Judaic studies, Canada–US relations, economics, and ecology on the editorial and op-ed pages. He edited the newspaper's weekly children's column as well as its daily advice column. Not least, from 1927 to 1933, Chaim Kruger published no fewer than ten serial novels in the Keneder Adler under the pseudonym "Hyman Zinman." None of them was ever published in book form. This article will briefly survey all of Kruger's serialized novels, and examine one, Der Froyen yeger (The Stalker of Women), in greater detail. It will attempt to situate Kruger's novelistic oeuvre in the context of the publication of scores of such serialized novels in the North American Yiddish press in the early twentieth century as well as in the context of attitudes toward popular Yiddish literature (shund) during that period.*

## Résumé

*Chaim Kruger (1877–1933) est né en Lituanie, a fait ses études dans des yeshivas lituaniennes et est devenu une personnalité d'une certaine importance dans la communauté juive de Montréal après son émigration au Canada en 1907. C'était un rabbin, un rosh yeshiva (professeur de Talmud), un shokhet (abatteur rituel) et, surtout, un pilier de l'équipe journalistique du journal yiddish de Montréal, Der Keneder Adler, de 1921 à 1933. Pour la une de ce journal, Kruger a traduit en yiddish le fil de presse sur des sujets d'intérêt national et international. Il a écrit des milliers d'articles sous son propre nom ainsi que plusieurs pseudonymes sur un large éventail de thématiques, y compris une longue série d'articles sur les études judaïques, les relations canado-américaines, l'économie et l'écologie sur les pages éditoriales et tribune libre. Il a édité la rubrique hebdomadaire pour enfants ainsi que sa rubrique de conseils quotidiens. De 1927 à 1933, Kruger a publié pas moins de dix romans en série dans le Keneder Adler sous le pseudonyme de « Hyman Zinman ». Aucun d'entre eux n'a jamais été publié sous forme de livre. Cet article passera brièvement en revue tous les romans en série de Kruger et en examinera un, Der Froyen yeger (Le harceleur des femmes), plus en détail. Il tentera de situer l'œuvre romanesque de Kruger dans le contexte de la publication de dizaines de*

*ces romans sérialisés dans la presse yiddish nord-américaine au début du XXe siècle ainsi que dans le contexte des attitudes envers la littérature yiddish populaire (shund) pendant cette période.*

In August and September 1931, Nakhmen Mayzel published an article in the Warsaw journal *Literarishe Bleter* examining thirty Yiddish daily newspapers of that time, and compiling a list of the serialized novels published in them. He found that fifty serialized novels were appearing in the newspapers he surveyed. Five of the newspapers presented their readers with three concurrent novels. Nine others were publishing two novels simultaneously. Mayzel found novels published simultaneously in two newspapers. In Mayzel's list of serialized novels from 1931, we find a few works by well-known authors still being read today, such as I. J. Singer's *Yoshe Kalb* and Sholem Asch's *Di muter*. However, the great majority of these novels, classified by many as *shund* (popular/sensational/trashy literature) are, along with their authors, essentially forgotten today.<sup>1</sup>

In North America circa 1930, the burgeoning Yiddish press was publishing serialized novels no less than its European counterpart.<sup>2</sup> These serialized Yiddish novels have recently begun to receive scholarly attention, in particular because it has been noted that many of the authors and readers of these novels were women and that these novels therefore could serve to better understand Jewish women's immigrant experience and literary expression in early twentieth century North America.<sup>3</sup>

Montreal's Yiddish daily newspaper, the *Keneder Adler* certainly published serialized novels, often presenting two or more simultaneously.<sup>4</sup> In the mid-1920s, these included Yiddish translations of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, and Emile Zola's *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, as well as original Yiddish novels such as Dr. Sh. Mayerovitch's *Di Eyzerne froy*, and M. Hidekel's *Dem Grafs tokhter*.

In this article, I will examine the novels written by a journalist on the staff of that newspaper. Chaim Kruger (1877–1933) was born in the Russian Empire and was educated in the Lithuanian yeshivas of Ponevezh (Panevėžys), Kupishok (Kupiškis), and Telz (Telšiai).<sup>5</sup> By age 16, Kruger came to live in Shavel (*Šiauliai*), where he devoted himself to studying modern Hebrew (*Haskala*) literature, as well as Russian and German languages and literatures, thus supplementing his yeshiva education.<sup>6</sup>

Kruger arrived in Montreal in 1907 and played many roles in the development of the Montreal Jewish community. His main occupation was as a *shokhet* (kosher slaughterer) of cattle. Thus, he was a member of the elite *Agudas ha-Shokhtim* of Montreal.<sup>7</sup> However, that demanding role did not seem to limit his engaging in several other significant activities. He was at various times a rabbi, a Hebrew teacher, a *Rosh Yeshi-*

va (teacher of Talmud), and, not least, from 1921, a journalistic mainstay on the staff of the *Keneder Adler*.

As his colleague Mordecai Ginzberg stated in his obituary of Kruger, he was involved with almost all the departments of the newspaper.<sup>8</sup> His prominence on the staff is evident in two *Keneder Adler* staff photos, one taken in 1927 and the other undated. In both, Kruger appears in a prominent position. In the 1927 photograph, he is seated at the end of the first row that also contained Hirsch Wolofsky (1878–1949), the publisher and editor-in-chief in the center, and in the other he appeared in the central position in the top row, next to poet and cultural editor J. I. Segal (1896–1954) on one side, and L. Cheifetz, the city editor, on the other.<sup>9</sup> He is readily identifiable, as he is the only person in either photograph to wear a visible yarmulka. As a strictly Orthodox Jew, he stood out from the rest of the newspaper's staff, whose level of Judaic commitment varied, but generally ranged from moderately traditional to non-observant.<sup>10</sup>

At the newspaper, Kruger wrote under his own name and utilized several pseudonyms as well, as was common in Yiddish journalism.<sup>11</sup> His contributions to the *Keneder Adler* appeared daily and were numerous and wide-ranging. His contributions during the twelve years of his association with the newspaper number in the thousands.

On a daily basis, Kruger translated the wire service reporting of items of national and international significance. Under his own name, H. Kruger, he wrote hundreds of articles on Judaism and Jewish holidays, including several series of articles on Judaic subjects such as the Jewish Calendar, Philo Judaeus, Josephus Flavius, Saadia Gaon, Judah Halevi, and Maimonides, as well as an account of his journey to Mandatory Palestine in 1933. Some of these series were of book length.<sup>12</sup> Using the pseudonym "Heker," he wrote hundreds of feuilletons with personal and often humorous takes on community, culture, and politics.<sup>13</sup> He edited and wrote for the newspaper's weekly children's column "*In Kinderland*," under the pseudonym "Onkel Borukh" (Uncle Boruch).<sup>14</sup> As I will detail in this article, he published ten serialized novels under the pseudonym "Hyman Zinman."<sup>15</sup> He wrote the *Keneder Adler*'s daily advice column, "*Der Shpiegel fun lebn*" ("*The mirror of life*") under the pseudonym "Dr. Rattgeber" (advice giver). Anonymously, he contributed a series of short articles on the vocabulary and grammar of Modern Hebrew entitled "*Limdu 'ivrit*" (learn Hebrew).

## The Novels

Kruger wrote ten serialized novels under the pseudonym Hyman Zinman. "Hyman" was the common Anglicization of Kruger's given name, Chaim. "Zinman," which means "tin man," has no discernable connection with Kruger. It was, however, a Jew-

ish family name represented in Montreal in Kruger's time. He would likely have been familiar with Zinman's Poultry Market on St. Dominique Street.<sup>16</sup>

Zinman wrote his novels from 1927 to 1933. Prior to 1927, however, he was engaged in writing and publishing short fiction in the children's column he edited, which tended to portray his reminiscences of Eastern European Jewish life when he was a boy.<sup>17</sup> It is likely that this experience of producing short fiction for young readers gave him a taste for creative writing that resulted in his novels aimed at adults.

In the seven years in which his serialized novels were produced, Zinman wrote continually. Once the final instalment of one novel appeared, there was usually a hiatus of only a week or ten days before the appearance of the first instalment of the next novel in the *Keneder Adler*. None of these novels was ever published in book form, and there is no evidence that they appeared in any other Yiddish newspaper. In the newspaper, the instalments were placed near the back end of the issue, generally on pages that contained advertisements. Often the instalments were inserted to fill the space around the advertisements.

Zinman's first novel was *Der Reikher Oriman* (*roman fun 'idishen lebn*) (The Rich Pauper: A Novel of Jewish Life). It was serialized in the *Keneder Adler* from April 8 to November 29, 1927.<sup>18</sup> It is a mystery novel set in Eastern Europe.

He next published *Di Amerikaner froy* (*roman fun amerikaner 'idishen lebn*) (The American Woman: A Novel of American Jewish Life), serialized from December 4, 1927, to August 7, 1928.<sup>19</sup> It is set in New York, Paris, and on board a refugee ship, and portrays the underworld in New York and Paris.

His third novel, published in the *Keneder Adler* from August 12, 1928, to February 21, 1929, in 147 instalments was *Der Gilgul* (Reincarnation).<sup>20</sup> It is set in London and Paris and highlights the then-popular doctrine of spiritualism, which posits the possibility of communicating with the deceased through seances, mediums, and other methods. It was undoubtedly influenced by the work of Kruger's colleague at the *Keneder Adler*, A. Almi (Eliyahu Sheps [1892–1963]) who, in 1921, published in Montreal a book on spiritualism, *Di Tsveyte eksistents* (*The Second Existence*).<sup>21</sup>

From February 4 to July 18, 1929, Zinman published *Der Blutiger Sholom* (The Bloody Peace).<sup>22</sup> This novel deals with contemporary Jewish life in New York's Lower East Side.

His fifth novel, serialized from July 21, 1929, to May 23, 1930, was *Dem Kohen Gadols Tokhter* (*A historisher roman fun 'idishen lebn in roym baarbet fun historishe kvellen*) (The High Priest's Daughter: A Historical Novel of Jewish Life in Rome Adapted from Historical Sources).<sup>23</sup> It is unique among the novels in that Kruger, under his own

name, published a preview of the novel that maintained formal distance from the novel by referring to its author in the third person.<sup>24</sup> Two of the revelations of Kruger's article are of considerable interest. He mentioned that the author had worked on this novel for two years, i.e., the time during which he published his first four novels. He also affirmed that the author had taken as his model the 1896 historical novel *Quo Vadis: A Narrative of the Time of Nero* by Henryk Sienkiewicz and wanted to do for ancient Judaism what Sienkiewicz had done for early Christianity. In Zinman's first attempt at a historical novel, he assiduously worked from the sources of ancient Jewish history that Kruger essentially simultaneously presented to the readers of the *Keneder Adler* in his nonfiction serialized studies of Philo Judaeus (1928–1929) and Josephus Flavius (1930–1931).<sup>25</sup>

Zinman's sixth novel, which I will discuss in more detail below, was *Der Froyen yeger* (a roman fun nokh di milkhome yoren) (The Stalker of Women: A Novel from the Post-war Years), published from May 26, 1930, to January 11, 1931.<sup>26</sup>

The seventh, and Zinman's longest, was *Zayn Nekome* (His Vengeance).<sup>27</sup> It is a historical novel set in the Jewish communities of Germany and Italy in the fourteenth century. It features a main character from the Abrabanel family, whose direct descent from the biblical King David is explicitly highlighted. An interesting feature of this novel is a detailed portrayal of life in the yeshiva of Worms, in which the author utilizes his youthful experiences in Lithuanian yeshivot. This novel's instalments appeared from January 18 to December 16, 1931.

The eighth novel that Zinman published from December 20, 1931, to July 1, 1932, was *Di Tyranishe muter, oder Amerikaner kinder* (The Tyrannical Mother, or American Children).<sup>28</sup> This novel of Jewish life in Europe and North America focuses on issues in contemporary Jewish family life.

The ninth novel, published from July 6, 1932, to February 22, 1933, was *Mizrah un Ma'arav* (East and West).<sup>29</sup> It is another historical novel set in the Middle Ages that ranges spatially from Mongolia in the East to Italy in the West, and depicts life among both Jews and non-Jews in the twelfth century. Historical Jewish personalities presented in the novel include Emmanuel of Rome, and the Baghdad Gaon, Samuel ben Ali. As with *Zayn Nekome*, the presentation of this historical novel's Judaic content is essentially simultaneous with the nonfictional material on the twelfth century Maimonidean controversy presented by Kruger in his serialized book on Maimonides that appeared in the *Keneder Adler* from 1931 to 1933.<sup>30</sup> An interesting subplot in the novel is a love story in Baghdad between a princess and a Bedouin, which was likely influenced by the popular 1924 film *Thief of Baghdad*.<sup>31</sup>

His tenth and last completed novel, published from March 12 to October 2, 1933, was *Di Falshe Shevue* (The False Oath), which was described as a “free translation” of a novel by German Orthodox rabbi and novelist Marcus Lehmann.<sup>32</sup> It describes Jewish life in Germany before the First World War and ends in the United States just after the war’s end.

Only Kruger’s death prevented the writing of an eleventh novel. However, prior to his decease, he outlined what his next novel would be, and this outline appeared in the *Keneder Adler* less than a month before his death.<sup>33</sup> It was entitled *Der Farma-skirter royber* (The Masked Robber) and subtitled *Roman fun idishn lebn in Amerike un Palestine* (A Novel of Jewish Life in America and Palestine). Its hero is a member of the Jewish Legion, a unit of the British Army that participated in the British conquest of Palestine in the First World War. It promised to be full of true to life adventure and romance and was undoubtedly influenced by Kruger’s 1933 trip to Mandatory Palestine, an account of which he published in the *Keneder Adler* between May 9 and December 21, 1933.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Der Froyen yeger***

*Der Froyen yeger*, Zinman’s sixth novel, was chosen for detailed analysis for several reasons. I did not choose one of Zinman’s earlier novels because I wanted to analyze a work in which the author, having had the experience of writing five earlier novels, could no longer be considered a beginner novelist. I also wanted to analyze a novel of substantial length, and *Der Froyen yeger*’s 162 instalments constitute Zinman’s third-longest novel. Finally, I preferred to examine a novel in which he dealt with contemporary Jewish life as opposed to one of his historical novels.

The novel is currently extant only on microfilm. There are a few issues of the *Keneder Adler*, which apparently contained instalments of the novel that are missing from the microfilm and do not exist in paper copy.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, *Der Froyen yeger* is substantially complete, and the small missing portions do not materially affect this analysis.

Briefly, *Der Froyen yeger* is a crime/detective novel set in New York City that deals in a major way with a quite sensitive and controversial subject of the era, Jewish involvement in the international trafficking of women for the purposes of prostitution, a phenomenon known as “white slavery.” Zinman thus chose an issue of significant contemporary interest within the Jewish community worldwide, one that produced sensational articles in the Yiddish press, and inspired a “small genre” of Yiddish literary works.<sup>36</sup> “White slavery” remained an issue of high anxiety among North American Jews in the early twentieth century because it directly impacted the image of the Jewish community as a whole in the eyes of many non-Jewish observers.<sup>37</sup> The very title of the novel is likely a spinoff of the title of a serialized novel on

“white slavery” published in New York in 1894 entitled *Der Froyen Hendler, Oder a Bestye in Mentshen Gestalt* (The Trafficker in Women or a Beast in Human Form), that was subtitled *A True Picture of Life in Europe and America*.<sup>38</sup>

As well, in writing a crime/detective novel, Zinman chose a fictional genre that enjoyed great popularity throughout the world, and that left a distinctive mark on the development of Yiddish literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>39</sup> Parenthetically, as the creator of a Jewish detective story in early twentieth century Montreal, Zinman was not alone. He had a colleague, another prominent member of the Montreal Jewish community, Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg, who had written in 1913 what amounted to a crime/detective story with the famous Rabbi Judah Loew (the Maharal of Prague) as its rabbi/detective.<sup>40</sup>

The “stalker of women” in the novel’s title, responsible for forcing numerous women into prostitution and for many other crimes, including murder and robbery, is ultimately revealed by the author to be a man who goes by the name of Frank Sutton.<sup>41</sup> It is probably not by accident that “Sutton,” when pronounced in Yiddish, sounds not dissimilar to “Satan.” However, Sutton does not appear to be an arch-criminal at the novel’s onset. Indeed, the reader’s first impression of all the major characters of the novel is ultimately shown to be completely wrong. No one in this novel is exactly who they say they are; all the major characters have something they are hiding.<sup>42</sup>

Sutton poses as a respectable businessman.<sup>43</sup> He is engaged to be married to Gertrude Friedman, adopted daughter of a wealthy couple, Louis and Rosa Friedman, who live in a lavish mansion on Manhattan’s Riverside Drive. Sutton also has a relationship with his beautiful secretary, Millie Trent, who is described as having a pretty face, naturally blonde hair, and being “well developed” (*gut entwikel*).<sup>44</sup> His office manager, John Blum, called “Captain Blum” because of his service in the Great War, is introduced as a person with a criminal record who was hired by Sutton to give him a chance at rehabilitation.<sup>45</sup> Captain Blum seems to be in love with Gertrude and she with him.<sup>46</sup> This deeply disturbs Louis Friedman, who accosts Blum and states that if he interferes with Gertrude’s marriage to Sutton, he will “shoot you [Blum] like a dog.”<sup>47</sup>

There are a number of twists and turns to the novel. Captain Blum is arrested for the murder of a jewel thief, Willy Green, that had taken place near Sutton’s office. Gertrude, who is about to marry Sutton and leave for a honeymoon in Switzerland, is devastated by Blum’s arrest. Nonetheless, she and Sutton are married. Blum is mysteriously released from police custody and makes a dramatic appearance at the wedding party held in the Friedman mansion that night.

In the middle of a very long night, Sutton is apparently murdered at a notorious underworld hangout known as the Leopard Club, with much circumstantial evi-



dence leading the reader to conclude that Blum committed the crime. Later on, the author introduces evidence that the crime might also have been committed by Bill, the manager of the Leopard Club, whose life had been saved by Captain Blum during the war, or by Louis Friedman.<sup>48</sup> As it turns out, no one actually killed Sutton at the Leopard Club that night. The gunshot that sounded that night in the club did not hit him. Sutton has instead ingested the wrong glass of champagne, containing a strong sleeping potion, which he had prepared for Millie, who was to meet him there, and whom he was planning to double cross.

In the aftermath of Sutton's (non)shooting, numerous hidden identities are revealed. First, Captain Blum reveals himself to be the mysterious Offenbach, Chief Detective of the New York Detective Bureau.<sup>49</sup> He had gone undercover to get the goods on Sutton, to whom Louis Friedman, not knowing whether he was Jewish or not, attributed a "Jewish brain" (*'idisher kop'*).<sup>50</sup> Moreover, in his origins, Blum/Offenbach was actually Yosef Blumenfeld, son of Avrohom and Taybele Blumenfeld of Vilna. That made him the brother of Gertrude Friedman, whose original name was Gitele Blumenfeld, and who had been adopted by Louis and Rosa Friedman, the brother and sister-in-law of Gertrude's deceased parents.

That night, Gertrude discovers not merely her long-lost brother, but also her long-lost sister, Shayna, who now goes by the name Serafina.<sup>51</sup> Serafina had been one of the many women duped by Sutton (whose original name was Pinchas Rosenthal).<sup>52</sup> She had been brought from Eastern Europe to a brothel in Havana, Cuba, from which she had been rescued by intrepid American newspaperman Feld, now editor of New York's fictional *Post-Courier* newspaper, who had been born in Bobruisk (now in Belarus) with the surname Feldman.<sup>53</sup> Feld(man) rescued Serafina/Shayna while he was searching through brothels for his own missing niece, Malka Trentovsky, who was another of the many girls Sutton/Rosenthal had lured into his net.<sup>54</sup> Malka Trentovsky had changed her name to Millie Trent and had been hypnotized by Sutton to do his bidding.<sup>55</sup> Gertrude, meanwhile, had been saved by the tumultuous events of her wedding night from travelling abroad with her new husband, Sutton, who was planning to have her, too, forced into prostitution.

The revelation of these multiple hidden identities does not by any means exhaust Zinman's myriad plot twists. Sutton manages to escape and joins forces with another arch criminal, "Dutch" Anderson (an homage to the well-known criminal of Jewish origins, Dutch Shultz).<sup>56</sup> Anderson's original Jewish name was Daniel Gutman, and along with many other crimes, he had taken ten young women from Eastern Europe to brothels in South Africa, Argentina, and Constantinople, the first of whom turns out to be Reyzel, now Rosa, the wife of Louis Friedman.<sup>57</sup>

With the help of Millie/Malka Trent(ovsky), who had been freed from Sutton's hypnotic spell, brilliant detective John/Yosef Blum/Blumenfeld/Offenbach tracks down both criminals, but not before Millie was nearly abducted by a criminal associate of "Dutch" Anderson, Jimmy the Safe Cracker, alias "Jiffy," whose original surname was Steinman.<sup>58</sup> She is rescued by a man named Tillman, whom we originally met as Sutton's bookkeeper, but who is actually an undercover investigative reporter for *The Megaphone*, a fictional rival to the *Post-Courier*, who is trying, like Blum/Offenbach, to get the goods on Sutton.<sup>59</sup> He turns out to be Rosa (Reyzl) Friedman's brother, son of Rasha and Fishel the wagon driver (*balegole*) of Lachovitz (Lyakhavichy, now in Belarus).<sup>60</sup>

In the end, both Sutton and Anderson are apprehended by Blum/Offenbach, with the help of Tillman and Trent(ovsky). The criminals are tried and pay for their crimes in the electric chair, and the novel ends with three marriages:

- Gertrude/Gitele marries Tillman, who leaves journalism and becomes a detective and Offenbach's protégé.<sup>61</sup> Within a year the Tillmans have a son, who is named after Gertrude's deceased father, Avrohom.
- Serafina/Sheyna marries Feld(man), her original rescuer, whose first wife had died.
- John/Yosef Blum/Blumenfeld/Offenbach marries Millie/Malka Trent(ovsky). They had developed a passionate relationship that generated perhaps the most sensual sentence of the entire novel: "Offenbach stroked Millie's wonderful golden hair, and she sent him a fiery glance that made him warm all over his body."<sup>62</sup>

After this brief and simplified plot summary, I would now like to deal with some of the realia that Zinman embeds in his narrative of contemporary Jewish life.

Although almost all the characters in the novel turn out to be not merely Jewish, but also Litvaks. There are some interesting and intriguing differences between them, reflecting the different ways in which immigrant Jews in North America, circa 1930, maintained or rejected their Judaic traditions.

None of the principal characters of the novel is a strictly Orthodox Jew, but there are significant differences in their attitudes toward Judaism. Some distance themselves from Orthodox Judaism. Rosa Friedman, for instance, openly expresses her dislike of strictly Orthodox women whom she refers to as "modest hypocrites" (*tsnius hipokrit-kes*).<sup>63</sup> Rosa/Reyzel wants the officiant at Gertrude's wedding to be a "rabbi" (*rabay*) of the richest shul.<sup>64</sup> Serafina/Sheyna laughs at the ideas of her "old-fashioned" (*altmodish*) Orthodox parents before being seduced and forced into prostitution by Sutton/Rosenthal.<sup>65</sup>

Rosa/Reyzel is ultimately disappointed in the choice of a rabbi for Gertrude's wedding to Sutton because her husband, Louis (Lev) chose to have the wedding overseen by a nameless "old-fashioned" rabbi, with a long white beard, who lives in a third-floor walk-up apartment on the Lower East Side.<sup>66</sup> Blum/Offenbach also expresses a preference for Orthodox rabbis as opposed to "Reform or semi-Reform rabbis [*rabonim*] who he stated are 'like imitation priests' [*galokhim*]."<sup>67</sup>

Louis Friedman at one point expresses a conventional Judaic sentiment: "We are Jews and we must believe that everything is from God's hands." Rosa, however, immediately and emphatically disagrees, asserting: "We must protect ourselves."<sup>68</sup>

Regarding men's attitudes toward women and the issue of women in Judaism, the female characters have much to say, little of it complementary to men. Serafina/Sheyna, because she had the experience of being seduced and forced into prostitution, expresses a particularly jaundiced view of men. "In every male," she states, there is stuck a dirty despicable thing [*dovor aher*]."<sup>69</sup> "Men disgust me," she adds. Gertrude, to whom she made these statements, certainly agrees, responding: "Men are the worst animals for us women."<sup>70</sup>

When Sutton escapes, there emerged the real possibility that Gertrude, who has just married him, would be placed in the halakhic position of an *agunah*, a woman unable to escape her marital ties except through the action of her now missing husband. Rosa Friedman expresses the inherent unfairness of Gertrude's position as a possible *agunah* very strongly to her husband: "I am a woman. I feel more than you men the difficult millstones that they have tied us to."<sup>71</sup> Rosa further states, "See how hard the chains are on Jewish women while men can do everything."<sup>72</sup>

Blum/Offenbach at the end also arrives at the realization that men now have to change their attitudes toward women, especially those women who have been sexually victimized by criminals like Sutton and "Dutch" Anderson:

It is high time that we modern men should change our attitude toward those women whom we have brought to a slippery slope and then left to sink in despair. Instead of turning away from them in disgust, we need to demonstrate our *bona fides* [*frumkeyt*] by extending our helping hand to them ... Most fallen women are the victims [*korbanos*] of a hypocritical society that agitates against the death penalty for their seducers while at the same time pushing these women down to the ground.<sup>73</sup>

## Toward a Conclusion

Since none of Zinman's novels were ever printed as books, I have good reason to believe that I am the only reader of any of his serialized novels, preserved only on

microfilm, in over ninety years. What have I gained from reading *Der Froyen yeger* that justifies my time and effort and the reader's patience with this article?

In the first place, the novel captures a cultural moment by giving us an insight into the readers who looked forward to the publication of the instalments of this novel in the *Keneder Adler*. They were Jewish immigrants to Canada whose Yiddish was fluent but for whom reading English, as was the case for Louis Friedman in the novel, came somewhat slowly.<sup>74</sup> Many of them had come to Canada as adults and could be described, as Rosa describes the well-to-do ladies in her charitable group, whom Zinman describes (and satirizes in loving detail) as *halb grine*—not completely new to their new country, but not fully acculturated either—who had to “tire [matern] their tongues with English but spoke among themselves ‘like mother spoke.’”<sup>75</sup> Their children, the younger generation that went to school in their new country, like Gertrude, “sp[oke] English like a native-born Yankee,”<sup>76</sup> and were raised on American detective stories.<sup>77</sup>

In the second place, it gives us an insight into Kruger the Yiddish journalist, part of whose task at his newspaper was evidently to produce these serialized novels, along with everything else he was writing.<sup>78</sup> This raises an obvious question. Kruger was a strictly Orthodox Jew, whose Orthodoxy was evident in many of his contributions to the *Keneder Adler*.<sup>79</sup> How did he reconcile the expectations of his readers for romance and sensual description, or, as he put it in the novel, “the fleshly [fleshign] love you read about in all novels”<sup>80</sup> with his religious principles? How did he feel writing mildly soft-porn descriptions of male-female encounters, like the following during the attempted abduction of Millie/Malka by Jimmy the Safecracker Steinman: “She felt his body pressing on her. The kisses became hotter, his hands wandered [blondzhen] over her body”?<sup>81</sup> To what extent were the critical opinions on the *agunah* issue that Zinman placed in the mouth of his female character his own? Final answers to these questions are not possible until more evidence is discovered. In the meantime, though, the very raising of these questions serves to nuance our understanding of Kruger, his newspaper, and his community circa 1930.

In the end, Zinman is not an undiscovered major writer of Yiddish fiction. *Der Froyen yeger's* author is not in the same league as his contemporaries I. J. Singer or Sholem Asch. On the other hand, his *Der Froyen yeger* is a good and interesting journeyman effort of a busy journalist (when he was not engaged in his day job as a kosher slaughterer), who was able to bring into print no less than ten novels in a seven-year period and knew how to employ standard fictional tropes such as the beautiful secretary, and the long-lost sibling.<sup>82</sup> He certainly knew enough to begin his crime/detective novel, *Der Froyen yeger*, on a dark and stormy night.<sup>83</sup>

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## 1

Dan Miron, "Yiddish Prose," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, [https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Prose/Yiddish\\_Prose](https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Prose/Yiddish_Prose); cited in Khone Shmeruk, "The History of 'Shund' Literature in Yiddish," trans. Tsiona Lida, *In geveb* (April 2023), accessed May 16, 2024.

## 2

On the North American Yiddish press in general, see J. Chaikin, *Yiddish Leaves in America: A Contribution to the History of the Yiddish Press in the United States and Canada from 1870 to 1945* [in Yiddish] (Published by the Author, 1946); Jacob Glatstein, Samuel Charney, and Hillel Rogoff, eds., *75 Yor Yidishe Prese, 1870–1945* (Y. L. Peretz Shrayber farayn, 1945). Cf. Ayelet Brinn, *A Revolution in Type: Gender and the Making of the American Yiddish Press* (New York University Press, 2023).

## 3

Cf. Saul Noam Zaritt, "Sarah Smith: Yiddish, Translation, and Popular American Fiction," *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 47, no. 4 (Winter 2022), 172–97; Ellen Kellman, "Entertaining New Americans: Serialized Fiction in the *Forverts* (1910–1930)," in *Jews and American Popular Culture*, vol. 2, ed. Paul Buhle (Praeger Perspectives, 2007), 199–212; Ellen Kellman, "The Newspaper Novel in the *Jewish Daily Forward*, 1900–1940: Fiction as Entertainment and Serious Literature," (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2000); Ayelet Brinn, "Beyond the Women's Section: Rosa Lebens-

boym, Female Journalists, and the American Yiddish Press," *American Jewish History*, 104, nos. 2–3 (2020): 347–69.

## 4

See Pierre Anctil and David Rome, *Through the Eyes of the Eagle: The Early Montreal Yiddish Press* (Véhicule Press, 2001); Rebecca Margolis, *Jewish Roots, Canadian Soil: Yiddish Culture in Montreal, 1905–1945* (McGill–Queen's University Press, 2011), 39–74; cf. memoirs of Keneder Adler's (hereafter KA) founder and publisher, Hirsch Wolofsky, *Mayn Lebns Rayze* (1946). An English translation, *The Journey of My Life* (1945), was published before the Yiddish original.

## 5

On Kruger, see Ira Robinson and Yosef Dov Robinson, "Maimonides for the Masses? Chaim Kruger, Yiddish Journalism, and Medieval Jewish Philosophy," *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes* 34 (2022), 56–82, <https://cjs.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cjs/article/view/40291>. I am presently writing a book on Chaim Kruger.

## 6

Kruger's interest in Russian literature is affirmed by his Keneder Adler colleague Jacob Isaac Segal in his obituary of Kruger, KA, January 7 and 28, 1934.

## 7

On the community of *shokhtim* in Montreal, an important component of a religious second-

ary elite within the Jewish community, see Ira Robinson, *Rabbis and Their Community: Studies in the Immigrant Orthodox Rabbinate in Montreal, 1896–1930* (University of Calgary Press, 2007), 69–86.

## 8

Mordecai Ginzberg, “R. Hayyim Kruger, a’h,” KA, January 2, 1934, 4.

## 9

On Segal, see Pierre Anctil, *Jacob Isaac Segal: A Montreal Yiddish Poet and His Milieu* (University of Ottawa Press, 2017).

## 10

For a study of the non-traditional stance of most Yiddish journalists in North America, see Gil Ribak, “The Organ of the Jewish People: The *Yidishes Tageblatt* and Uncharted Conservative Yiddish Culture in America,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 112, no. 4 (September 2022): 795–822.

## 11

Among his pseudonyms were H. K. Shokhat (alluding to his initials and his occupation of shoḥet), Double Kof, Rokeah, a Gast (a guest); Isaac Bashevis Singer utilized the pseudonym “Bashevis” when he published his literary fiction, the pseudonym “Varshavski” for his news commentaries, and “Segal” for his articles on popular science, <https://www.bashevissinger.com/biography>, accessed November 4, 2025.

## 12

Kruger’s only published book, *Der Rambam, zayn leben un shafn* (1933) was created from just such a series of articles on Maimonides.

## 13

This pseudonym was essentially his initials Hayyim Kruger. In Hebrew, *heker* means “investigation” or “examination.”

## 14

Ira Robinson, “‘Onkel Borukh’ in Children’s Land: Chaim Kruger Edits the *Keneder Adler*’s Children’s Column, 1924–1933,” unpublished paper.

## 15

Hymen was used by Kruger as his “English” first name.

## 16

Lovell’s Directory of Montreal, 1930–1931, <https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/3653363?docsearchtext=lovell%201930>, accessed Nov. 4, 2025.

## 17

KA, May 24, 1928, August 4, 1927, May 28, 1924, and December 24, 1924.

## 18

There are a total of 140 extant instalments. There exist some gaps in the KA microfilm, and for most of those gaps, no other copy is known to exist.

## 19

This novel was serialized in 92 instalments.

## 20

This novel was serialized in 147 instalments.

## 21

On Almi, see Ira Robinson “A Second Existence: A. Almi, Spiritualism, and the Search for a Secular Jewish Mysticism” (paper presented at the Association for Jewish Studies Conference, 2014).

## 22

This novel was serialized in 105 instalments.

## 23

This novel was serialized in 192 instalments.

## 24

KA July 16, 1929.

## 25

Serialized in 59 and 45 instalments, respectively.

## 26

This novel was serialized in 139 instalments.

## 27

This novel was serialized in 243 instalments

## 28

This novel was serialized in 128 instalments

## 29

This novel was serialized in 153 instalments.

## 30

See Robinson and Robinson, “Maimonides for the Masses?”

## 31

*The Thief of Bagdad*, film, directed by Raoul Walsh (1924).

**32**

This novel was serialized in 106 instalments; on the issues inherent in “free translations” into Yiddish, see Danny Luzon, “Shakespeare ‘Translated and Improved’: The Translational Politics of the American Yiddish Theater and Its Afterlife,” *American Literature* 94, no. 2 (2022): 273–99.

**33**

KA, December 6, 1933.

**34**

KA printed 30 instalments.

**35**

The issues missing from the microfilm are those of Friday, December 26, 1930, Wednesday, December 31, 1930, and Friday, January 2, 1931. The non-existence of these issues in paper was confirmed in an email to the author from Janice Rosen, archives director of the Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives, March 22, 2024.

**36**

See “A Freuen handler a bal teshuva git zikh aleyn iber in di hent fun der politsey,” *Keneder Adler*, October 14, 1925, 5; “Freuen handler shtet zikh far als general sekretar fun Lord Plumer,” *Keneder Adler*, July 19, 1926, 5; Edward J. Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight Against White Slavery, 1870–1939* (Schocken, 1983), 216–18; Isabel Vincent, *Bodies and Souls: The Tragic Plight of Three Jewish Women Forced into Prostitution in the Americas* (Random House Canada, 2005).

**37**

Mia Brett, “‘Ten Thousand Bigamists in New York’: The Criminalization of Jewish Immigrants Using White Slavery Panics,” *Gotham Center for New York City History*, October 27, 2020, <https://www.gothamcenter.org/blog/ten-thousand-bigamists-in-new-york>; cf. Mara Keire, “The Vice Trust: A Reinterpretation of the White Slavery Scare in the United States, 1907–1917,” *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 1 (Autumn 2001): 5–41.

**38**

The name of the author is not listed on the book’s title page: <https://ia801906.us.archive.org/16/items/nybc201292/nybc201292.pdf>, accessed Nov. 4, 2025.

**39**

Nathan Cohen, “Sherlock Holmes in the Pale of Settlement: Yiddish Crime Stories

1860–1914,” *Jiddistik heute/Yiddish Studies Today* 1 (2012): 253–78. On the genre in general, see Martin Priestman, *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

**40**

Shnayer Z. Leiman, “The Adventure of the Maharal of Prague in London: R. Yudel Rosenberg and the Golem of Prague,” *Tradition* 36, no. 1 (2002): 26–58; Ira Robinson, *A Kabbalist in Montreal: The Life and Times of Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg* (Touro University Press, 2021), 165–7.

**41**

The American actor, Frank Sutton (1923–1974) would have been quite unknown to the author.

**42**

One of the ways in which the characters hide their identities is through name changes. See Kirsten Fermaglich, *A Rosenberg by Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America* (New York University Press, 2018).

**43**

Vincent notes that the “white slave” trade functioned very much like a business (*Bodies and Souls*, 68–69).

**44**

KA, June 9 and 27, 1930.

**45**

KA, June 30 and July 20, 1930.

**46**

KA, June 24, June 29, and September 19, 1930.

**47**

KA, July 31, 1930.

**48**

KA, September 26, and November 26, 1930.

**49**

KA, June 25 and 26, 1930.

**50**

KA, July 7, 1930.

**51**

KA, November 7 and 9, 1930.

**52**

KA, November 26, and December 17, 1930.

**53**

KA, October 31, and November 2 and 5, 1930.

**54**

KA, December 16, 1930.

**55**

KA, December 17, 1930, and January 8, 1931.

**56**

On Shultz (1902-1935), see <https://www.biography.com/crime/dutch-schultz>, accessed Nov. 4, 2025.

**57**

KA, December 9, 1930, and January 8, 1931. Rosa's "past" is foreshadowed in KA, December 1, 1930.

**58**

KA, December 29, 1930.

**59**

KA, December 2, 1930.

**60**

KA, January 6, 1931.

**61**

KA, December 21, 1930, and January 7, 1931.

**62**

KA, December 8, 1930.

**63**

KA, November 5, 1930.

**64**

KA, July 7, 1930. The Yiddish spelling here implies a non-Orthodox rabbi.

**65**

KA, October 23, 1930.

**66**

KA, August 19, 1930, and January 8, 1931.

**67**

KA, January 9 and 11, 1931.

**68**

KA, November 4 and 6, 1930.

**69**

KA, November 3, 1930. The term "*dovor akher*" often refers to pigs.

**70**

KA, November 5, 1930.

**71**

KA, November 28, 1930.

**72**

KA, December 3 and 4, 1930.

**73**

KA, January 8, 1931.

**74**

KA, July 3 and 7, 1930.

**75**

KA, July 7, 1930.

**76**

KA, July 7, and October 22, 1930.

**77**

KA, January 4, 1931.

**78**

Another contemporary example of a Yiddish journalist who wrote serialized novels along with many other writing tasks at his newspaper was Getsel Zelikovits of the *Tageblatt* (New York). See Brinn, *Revolution in Type*, 37–8.

**79**

For example, in his children's column, "*In Kinderland*," he did not accept a student composition for publication because the composition mentioned a "Second Isaiah." KA, December 23, 1926.

**80**

KA, July 29, and September 19, 1930.

**81**

KA, December 25, 1930. For similar passages, cf. KA August 5 and 19, 1930.

**82**

KA, June 9, 1930. Kruger's feuilleton, written under the pseudonym Heker, "*Vi tsu shrayben moderne romanen* [how to write modern novels]," was published in KA on May 20, 1927, shortly after he began publishing serialized novels, which indicates that he was aware of certain trends in contemporary fiction.

**83**

KA, June 1, 1930.